

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



State Parks Operations and Maintenance

Purpose and History

The state park system was established in 1920 with the dedication of Backbone State Park. State parks are under the administration of the Parks Bureau in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Since establishment, the park system has grown to include 56,000 acres in 54 core state parks and satellite areas with supporting facilities that include 5,154 campsites, 86 rental cabins, 147 picnic shelters, 75 modern restrooms, 67 shower buildings, 620 miles of trails, and 51 office and maintenance buildings. Beginning in 2004, the General Assembly appropriated funds from the Environment First Fund (EFF) to the DNR for operation and maintenance of state parks and park facilities. The DNR determines the allocation of appropriated dollars to support operation and maintenance activities. Resources are used to support the following activities:

- Seasonal staff – These workers provide important basic maintenance activities in state parks during peak seasons. This includes grass mowing and trimming, cleaning of buildings, gathering trash and scooping ashes from fire rings, and eradicating invasive species and other natural area management activities. Seasonal staff also serves as park interpreters, giving guided nature hikes, campground programs, roving education, and outdoor skills demonstrations.
- Facility Maintenance – Supports existing buildings, including preventative routine maintenance and deterioration resulting from deferred maintenance. Specific examples of facilities include cabins, lodges, shelters, picnic tables, restrooms, signs, beaches, trails, bridges, park residences, offices, maintenance shops, and storage buildings. This line item also provides resources to purchase the supplies necessary to maintain facilities.
- Equipment Replacement and Maintenance – Provides resources to replace aging equipment such as tractors, mowers, skid steers, trailers, and utility vehicles. The DNR intends to use a portion of the funding increase in FY 2014 to replace worn out equipment and restart a cost-effective replacement schedule. Additionally, this appropriation supports the operation and repair of the DNR's current inventory of equipment. Expenses include gasoline, diesel fuel, oil, filters, mower blades, tires, and repair parts and labor.
- Refill Critical Vacancies – Appropriated funds also support staff needs in areas deemed important by the DNR. The FY 2014 increase will support three park rangers and two natural resource technicians. Three new rangers will be assigned to Gull Point State Park, Pine Lake State Park, and Lake Keomah State Park. Natural resource technicians will be assigned to Lewis and Clark State Park and Mines of Spain State Park.

Funding History

Funding for state park operations and maintenance is from the Environment First Fund. The amount varies from year to year, but has ranged between \$2.0 million and \$6.4 million annually. The DNR also receives a state park infrastructure appropriation from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund. These funds are dedicated exclusively to construction projects, and are not used for operations and staff time.

Related Statutes

[571](#) Iowa Administrative Code chapters [61](#) and [67](#)

Revised August 23, 2016

More Information

Department of Natural Resources State Parks: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Destinations/StateParksRecAreas.aspx>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

LSA Staff Contact: Adam Broich (515-281-8223) deb.kozel@legis.iowa.gov